U C L A

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH LIBRARY

Department of Special Collections

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

THE CENTENARY OF "A SHROPSHIRE LAD"
THE LIFE & WRITINGS
OF A. E. HOUSMAN

by

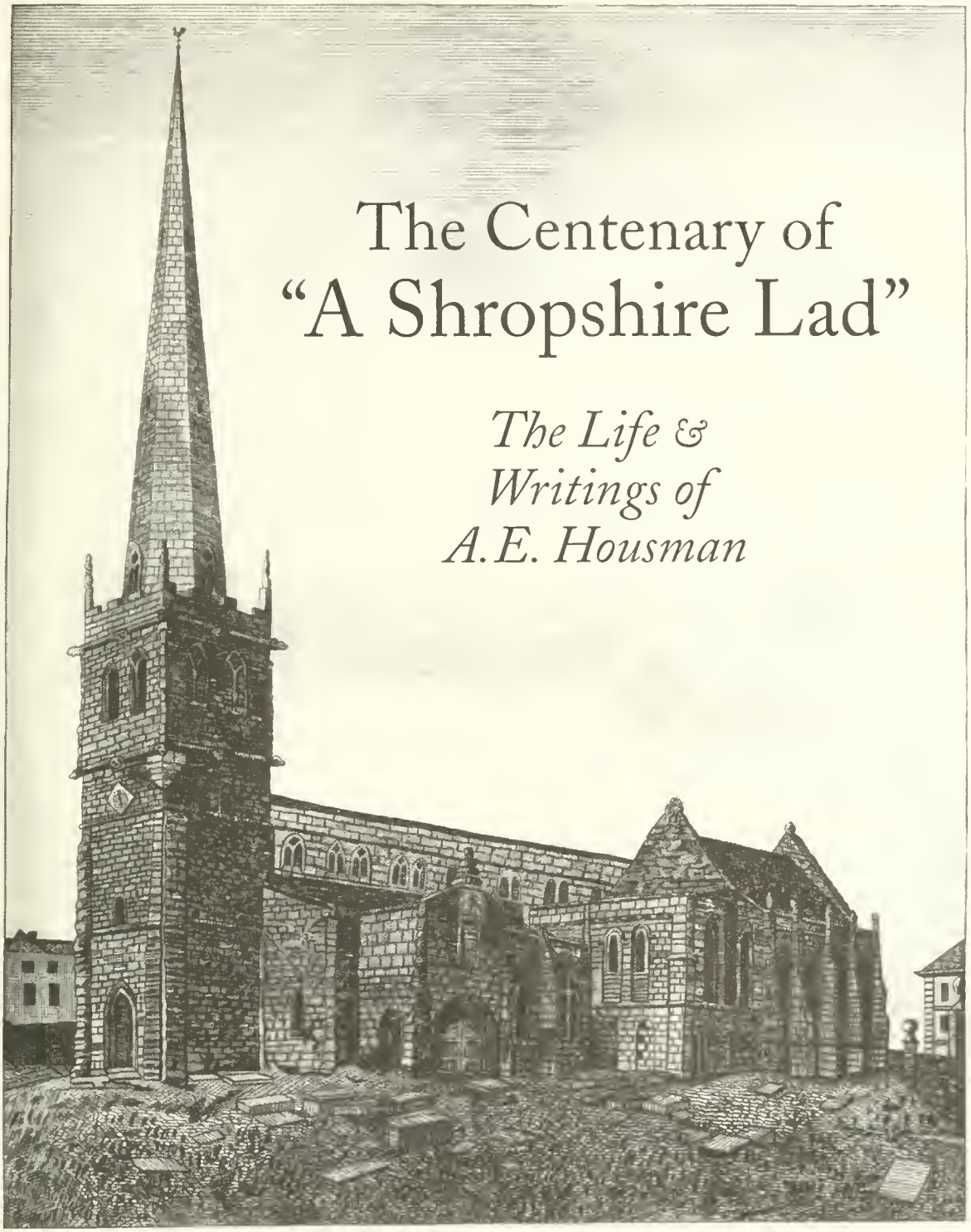
P. G. NAIDITCH

U C L A

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH LIBRARY

Department of Special Collections

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



The Centenary of "A Shropshire Lad"

The Life & Writings of A.E. Housman

Department of Special Collections
University Research Library
University of California
Los Angeles, 1996

The Centenary of "A Shropshire Lad": the Life and Writings of A. E. Housman. An Exhibition in the University Research Library, January 2 – March 31, 1996.

Catalogue: P. G. Naiditch.

Titlepage design: Ellen Watanabe.

Illustration: J. Phillips, *The History and Antiquities of Shrewsbury*, London: Printed & Sold by T. Wood, 1779, facing p. 90 (St. Mary's Church) (UCLA Special Collections: DA 690 S58 P5).

The Author is grateful to the Society of Authors and the Estate of A. E. Housman for permission to publish new material by A. E. Housman (Copyright © The Estate of A. E. Housman, 1996).

Remaining, previously unpublished, text: Copyright © The Regents of the University of California, Los Angeles, 1996.

The Author is pleased to acknowledge the help of the late Seymour Adelman; Phillip Bevis, Los Angeles; John Espey, Malibu; Penelope Gee, Sydney, Australia; Vance Gerry, Pasadena; G. P. Goold, South Hadley, Mass.; Rinard Z. Hart, Claremont; David J. Holmes, Philadelphia; George Houlé, Los Angeles; Sue A. Kaplan, UCLA; James E. Lorson, Fullerton; Carol Morrison, Braille Institute, Los Angeles; Edward N. O'Neil, Claremont; Stephen J. Pigman, UCLA; Donald Tinker; and Liza Walton, UCLA.

He is further glad to record his gratitude to the following institutions for their kindnesses and courtesies: British Library, London; Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania; Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio; Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Merton College, Oxford; Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; Princeton University, New Jersey; Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; Trinity College, Cambridge, the University Library, Cambridge; the University of San Francisco.

INTRODUCTION

A CENTURY AGO, at the close of February 1896, *A Shropshire Lad* appeared. The volume was published at the author's expense; it was received by critics with courtesy, and on occasion with enthusiasm; but it was not regarded as a work especially significant in English poetry. The edition numbered about 500 copies, of which perhaps 154 were distributed in the United States; the book was priced two shillings six pence; it required more than two years for the edition to sell out.

The second edition, issued in 1898 at 3/6, likewise consisted only of about five hundred copies. The third edition, published in 1900 at 3/- each, numbered one thousand copies. The fourth edition, dated 1903 but published at the close of the previous year, consisted of two thousand copies at sixpence or a shilling, depending on format. By the close of 1902, purchasers in Great Britain and the United States had acquired only two thousand copies. The population of Great Britain was then in excess of 41,000,000; that of the United States, over 76,000,000.[1]

To keep prices down, the author, A. E. Housman, declined to accept royalties, a practice he continued for a quarter of a century. At first, the poems only slowly attracted attention. But, eventually, in World War I, they came to possess so solid a following that when Housman brought out his second book of verse, *Last Poems*, in 1922, it was regarded by many as the literary event of the year.

Now, a hundred years after the original publication, new editions of *A Shropshire Lad* continue to be issued. In 1990, Dover Thrift Editions produced a copy for a dollar; in the same year, the Tern Press published a limited edition with wood-engravings by Nicholas Parry. In 1991, Walker Books issued an edition, with illustrations by Robin Bell Corfield, which was reprinted the following year. Likewise in 1992, the Zauberberg Press in Kansas issued a very limited edition (twenty copies) with illustrations by John De Pol. In 1994, Woodstock Books of Oxford and New York issued a facsimile of the first edition. This brief catalogue, covering only 1990–1994, deliberately does not take into account reprints of Housman's *Collected Poems.*

Alfred Edward Housman was born, on March 26, 1859, in a house called The Little Valley or The Valley House, Fockbury, in the parish of Catshill, Worcestershire.[2,3] He was the eldest of the seven children of Edward Housman, a Bromsgrove solicitor, and his wife Sarah Jane Williams. It was a talented family: Clemence (1861-1955) is remembered as artist, novelist, and an active supporter of women's suffrage; Laurence (1865-1959), variously as illustrator, novelist, playwright and likewise an active

---

1. For the size of the early editions and their prices, see Grant Richards, *Housman 1897-1936*, London 1941 (henceforth, Richards), pp. 16, 25, 32 sq. It is commonly, and mistakenly, supposed that Henry Altemus issued an edition in Philadelphia in 1902: see Naiditch, *Problems in the Life and Writings of A. E. Housman*, Beverly Hills: Krown & Spellman, 1995 (henceforth, *PLW/AEH*), p. 118: the earliest form of Altemus's text belongs to ca 1909.

2. For his life, see A. S. F. Gow's brief and excellent *A. E. Housman: a Sketch*, Cambridge 1936: for its defects, some deliberate, see Naiditch, *A. E. Housman at University College, London: the Election of 1892*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988 (henceforth, *AEH/UCL*), pp. 11, 26 sq. and *PLW/AEH* p. 227. See too especially *Classical Scholarship: a Biographical Encyclopedia* edd. W. W. Briggs Jr and W. M. Calder III, New York: Garland, 1990, pp. 190-204 (corrigenda: *PLW/AEH* p. ix n. 2) and *The Letters of A. E. Housman* ed. Henry Maas, London 1971 (henceforth, *Letters*) (with *PLW/AEH* pp. 230 sq.). Unfortunately, none of the formal biographies can be recommended without reservation: although Norman Page's *A. E. Housman: a Critical Biography*, London 1985 (to be re-issued in 1996) has merit, it needs to be used with care (see *PLW/AEH* pp. 231 sq.).

3. Housman called it The Little Valley (H. to unknown, Sept. 30, 1930: Bryn Mawr College, Adelman Collection). His family latterly called it The Valley House. For the region, see John Pugh, *Bromsgrove and the Housmans*, Bromsgrove 1974 (with *PLW/AEH* p. 232).

supporter both of the women's rights movement and of pacifism. Of the rest, Robert became a munitions expert; Basil a physician; Katharine Elizabeth wrote a history of the school where her husband, Edward W. Symons, had been headmaster; and George Herbert joined the army as an enlisted man and was killed in combat during the Boer War.[4]

Housman's childhood was pleasant. But about 1870 his mother developed cancer, dying the following year on his twelfth birthday; and this loss contributed to that dark view of existence that characterized him for the rest of his life. It was indeed about this time that he abandoned Christianity not for agnosticism but for deism.

By 1877, Housman stood at the head of his local school, King Edward VI Grammar School, Bromsgrove. More significantly, in the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination, he was ranked amongst the top twelve students nation-wide, earning distinction in Latin, Greek, French and History, in a field where 47% of the candidates did not pass at all.[5] In this same year, he won a scholarship to St John's College, Oxford.

At Oxford, it cannot be said that Housman took his studies seriously. To be sure, he received first class honors in Classical Moderations in 1879. But he also evidenced a cavalier attitude in his work, for example composing a poem for the Newdigate Prize the night before it was due. In all probability he regarded himself as possessed of such talent and such genius that he had little need to apply himself to his studies. In the event, in 1881, he was failed in his final examinations, a disgrace which caused him to withdraw into himself.[6]

Housman had designed himself for the life of a scholar, and this failure at Oxford almost closed his career before it had properly begun. With the reform of the Universities not long before, the chances for a failed candidate to obtain a college fellowship or a university professorship were greatly reduced, and this Housman must soon have realized. He obtained a "Pass" degree from Oxford, though with difficulty; successfully took the Civil Service Examinations, albeit without special distinction; and, late in 1882, joined the Patent Office in London, probably first as the private secretary to the head of the Office. His arrogance however soon lost him that appointment, and he became a higher division clerk in the Trade Marks Division. This position Housman retained until 1892.

Late in 1882, when he moved to London to work in the Patent Office, Housman dwelt with his Oxford friend, Moses John Jackson (1858-1923), in Bayswater lodgings. Jackson, who had received first class honors in the Natural History examinations, now held a position as one of the twelve special "indexing clerks" in H. M. Patent Office. Together with Jackson's brother, Adalbert (died 1892), who was studying classics at University College, they lived together at least until late 1884. Around that time, Adalbert left London to work as a schoolmaster. Not long afterwards, following an altercation, Jackson and Housman separated. Jackson indeed, already unhappy with administrative changes in the Patent Office, in 1887 accepted a position as Principal of Sind College, Karachi and resigned from the

---

4 For Laurence, see his autobiography *The Unexpected Years*, Indianapolis 1936. There is no satisfactory biography, albeit sufficient materials for a biography exist. The chief modern study is Rodney Engen's *Laurence Housman*, Stroud: Catalpa Press, 1983. For Clemence, there may be insufficient materials for a formal life. Brief accounts of Housman's siblings appear in Pugh, *Bromsgrove and the Housmans* pp. lii-lxxiii.

5. See *PLW/AEH* pp. 4-6, 7-8.

6. For various explanations for Housman's failure, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 191-204; *PLW/AEH* pp. 9-13. It was around this time that Housman became an atheist.

Office. His later efforts to return to London as a Professor of Physics at University College, London, though aided by Housman, were unsuccessful.

Jackson was Housman's greatest friend. The altercation, the causes for which are uncertain, was troubling; and the division between them was not healed for years. Eventually, in 1900, Housman stood as godfather for the fourth of his friend's sons. In the meanwhile, Housman, having taken rooms in Highgate, continued with his classical studies and, on the side, began to compose poetry.[7]

Housman's classical studies had begun in his childhood. At Oxford, aside from his ordinary work, he spent considerable time and effort on the emendation of Propertius. His first publication however concerned Horace, and it appeared while he was still technically an undergraduate. It seems likely that, in sending an offprint of this paper to H. A. J. Munro, Housman hoped that the former Professor of Latin at Cambridge would suggest a route by which he might escape the consequences of his failure at Oxford. No such suggestion was forthcoming; the letters were merely polite.[8] The following year, 1883, Housman published a brief note on Ovid's *Ibis*. Two years later, in 1885, he submitted a proposal for an edition, with commentary, of Propertius to the Oxford University Press, where it was rejected on Robinson Ellis's advice, and then to Macmillan's. Ellis troubled to write a long letter to Housman, explaining the reasons for his rejection; Macmillan's declined it briefly and quickly.[9] Housman however did not abandon a field which seemed closed to him. Instead, he wrote a lengthy article, "Emendationes Propertianae", dating it October 1886, and submitted it to the *Journal of Philology*, the chief British classical periodical of the period. The article was not only accepted but honored with primacy of place in the number when it appeared in 1887.[10] It was with this article that Housman began to regain the ground his Oxford failure had cost him. The article attracted interest, and it was at this time that he gained the support of notable scholars such as R. Y. Tyrrell of Dublin, Henry Jackson of Cambridge, and J. P. Postgate of both Cambridge and University College, London. Thereafter, Housman continued to compose technical papers, proposing corrections in major classical authors such as Horace and Ovid, Aeschylus and Sophocles and Euripides. At length, in 1891, he completed a book, *The Manuscripts of Propertius.* This he submitted to the Cambridge University Press. It was rejected, though the Syndics of the Press recommended its inclusion as a series of articles in the *Journal of Philology.*[11]

In 1892, when University College, London, advertised the positions of Professor of Latin and Professor of Greek, Housman was a candidate for either position, with a stated preference for the Chair of Latin. His pamphlet of testimonials was, in rank of supporters and in the strength of their several commendations, outstanding; his publications, both by their excellence as critical essays and by the elegance of his exposition, impressed the election committee; and, despite his failure at Oxford, the committee

---

7. For M. J. Jackson, see *PLW/AEH* pp. 132-144; for his brother Adalbert, see *ibid* pp. 139 sq. n. 3. For the date of Housman's poetry, see *ibid.* pp. 103 sq.

8. For dating of the lost correspondence with Munro, and its tone, see *ibid.* pp. 14-16.

9. It is of course possible, though perhaps less likely, that Housman approached Macmillan's first. For Housman and Ellis, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 32-52. Not improbably, it was Ellis who first turned Housman's interest to Propertius (*ibid.* p. 41). For Ellis's role in Oxford's refusal, see Gilbert Murray, *John O'London's Weekly* 2, 1960, p. 404 = *op.cit.* p. 42.

10. For the dating of this and others of Housman's classical papers, see *PLW/AEH* pp. 149-150.

11. For Tyrrell, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 216-220; for Jackson, see *ibid.* pp. 165-172; for Postgate, see *ibid* pp. 74-91. For the history of *The Manuscripts of Propertius,* see *ibid.* pp. 77, 79.

recommended the appointment of Housman to the position of his choice. Thereafter, at University College, Housman fulfilled in exemplary fashion the duties assigned him.[12]

In 1895, Housman found himself composing more and more poetry. For much of his life, he had occasionally written verse, usually humorous, sometimes serious; but the new output differed in quality from most of what he had earlier achieved. He himself attributed this poetical inspiration alternately to ill-health, a "relaxed sore throat" that afflicted him in the first five months of the year, or to anxiety resulting from a controversy in which he was involved.[13] In any event, by the final months of 1895, he had enough to justify a volume.

This book, which he entitled "Poems by Terence Hearsay", consisted of sixty-six poems, and differed from the final version. It commenced with "The Recruit", later *A Shropshire Lad* III, and concluded with "Terence, this is stupid stuff", afterwards *ASL* LXII. The volume was quickly declined by the publisher he approached.[14] Housman reorganized the volume and, apparently at the suggestion of an Oxford friend, now of the British Museum library, he retitled it *A Shropshire Lad*. His friend, A. W. Pollard, then arranged for the volume to be published, at Housman's expense, by Kegan Paul.[15]

On its appearance *A Shropshire Lad* was fairly widely reviewed. But few of the twenty-nine reviews and notices were in significant publications. Apparently by accident, the book received no criticism in the *Athenaeum*, then the most influential literary weekly in Britain. Even so, it attracted attention and enthusiasm both in England and in the United States.[16] And two British publishers, John Lane and Grant Richards, interested themselves in Housman: Lane, who had purchased copies of the first edition and published them in the United States, probably sought to publish the author's next volume of verse; Richards seemingly expressed the desire to bring out a second edition. In particularly seeking to reprint, rather than to issue a new work by the author, Richards was fortunate. When the original publisher expressed no desire to reprint it, Housman transferred *A Shropshire Lad* to Richards. In the years that followed, Richards brought out one inexpensive edition after another.

Championed by William Archer in England and Witter Bynner in America, the latter of whom arranged for individual poems to be given a wider audience in *McClure's Magazine*, the book gradually became more and more popular. Although the gradual increase in popularity of *A Shropshire Lad* is difficult to trace with precision, it is clear that, by 1922, Housman's standing as a poet with the population at large was high. Although this afforded Housman satisfaction, he himself made no effort to "market" the volume. It was rare for him to publish new poems in newspapers or periodicals. He avoided interviews. He did not encourage others to write about him, and there was little gossip to be found even in the literary periodicals. His "trade" was that of professor of Latin, and the duties consequent to this position consumed much of his time; and whilst Housman ranks high as a poet the truth is that he ranks even higher as a classical scholar. His principal work was an edition, with commentary, of the *Astronomica* by Marcus Manilius.

It was around 1896 or 1897 that Housman began work on Manilius. His first publication, a list of corrections in the first book, appeared in 1898; a second list, in the fifth book, in 1900. Three years later,

---

12. For the election, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 1-26 and relevant notes; for Housman at UCL, *ibid.* pp. 100-157.

13. See *PLW/AEH* pp. 86-89.

14. For the "Poems", see *PLW/AEH* pp. 92 sq.

15. For Pollard, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 228-232.

16. For the reception of Housman's verse, see Philip Gardner, *A. E. Housman: the Critical Heritage*, London: Routledge, 1992, with *PLW/AEH* pp. 226 sq. and Archie Burnett's review in *Essays in Criticism* 44, Jan. 1994, pp. 68-74.

he published, again at his own expense, an edition of book one. This, his first published classical book, appeared when he was forty-four. It was a volume that excited both admiration and indignation. Housman, in his criticisms, had always been somewhat undiplomatic in his expressions of contempt, and his words often enough gave offence.

> If I had no judgment, and knew it, and were nevertheless immutably resolved to edit a classic, I would single out my victim from the first of these three classes [authors surviving in one manuscript or in a few manuscripts closely derived from one]: that would be best for the victim and best for me. Authors surviving in a solitary MS are by far the easiest to edit, because their editor is relieved from one of the most exacting offices of criticism, from the balancing of evidence and the choice of variants. They are the easiest, and for a fool they are the safest. One field at least for the display of folly is denied him: others are open, and in defending, correcting, and explaining the written text he may yet aspire to make a scarecrow of the author and a byword of himself; but with no variants to afford him scope for choice and judgment he cannot exhibit his impotence to judge and choose.
>
> But the worst of having no judgment is that one never misses it, and buoyantly embarks without it upon enterprises in which it is not so much a convenience as a necessity. . . .[17]

Nor did he limit himself to generalized criticisms. His writings are replete with disagreeable comments on his predecessors and contemporaries. "The worst of it" wrote Robinson Ellis, the author of *Noctes Manilianae*, "is that no one is exempted; the field is strewn with the corpses of his slain." Housman himself, remembering how he had treated Ellis in the book, added a note in one of his copies of the review. Addressing Ellis, he remarked: "You are: thank your stars".[18]

At the close of 1910 the Cambridge Professor of Latin, J. E. B. Mayor, died. By this time, aside from hundreds of pages of occasional notes, articles and reviews, Housman had also edited Ovid's *Ibis* and Juvenal's satires for Postgate's *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum* and, as usual, at his own expense, brought out a separate edition of the satirist. He was persuaded to stand for the Cambridge chair and, in 1911, he was elected.[19] Additionally, he was then made a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. "The election of Mr A. E. Housman into the Professorship of Latin came as a surprise to all but a very few; but there were some who thought him the best Latinist in England and perhaps in Europe." So too his old Oxford college elected him to an Honorary Fellowship. As a rule however Housman declined public honors. By 1934, these included nine honorary doctorates and the Order of Merit. The sole chief exception was his reluctant agreement to deliver the Leslie Stephen Lecture. This lecture, which he entitled *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, afforded him neither pleasure nor satisfaction, though it was praised by many, including T. S. Eliot: Eliot's followers and admirers however, such as F. R. Leavis, thought they recognized in the talk an attack on their views.[20]

---

17. *M. Manilii astronomicon liber 1*, London: Grant Richards, 1903, pp. xxii sq., xxxi.

18. Ellis, *Hermathena* 30, 1904, p. 7. Housman's annotated copy is at UCLA (PN2 H42): unfortunately, on acquisition, during World War II, the notes were not recognized, and the binder cropped them: what remains is "you are: th[ ] | your stars."

19. For Mayor, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 204-208 and *PLW/AEH* pp. 32-34. For Housman's election to the Cambridge chair, see *AEH/UCL* p. 168. After Housman's appointment, the chair was named the "Kennedy Professorship" (*PLW/AEH* pp. 27 sq.).

20. For the similarity of Housman and Eliot's views, see B. J. Leggett, *The Poetic Art of A. E. Housman: Theory and Practice*, Lincoln (Neb.)/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1978, pp. 87 sqq. The first person to recognize their similarity seems to have been Abdul-Wahid Lúlúa in *A. E. Housman: Critical Reputation, 1896-1962*, Dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1962, p. 88.

During the last quarter century of his life, Housman edited the four remaining books of Manilius, and prepared an *editio minor* of that author; he edited the *Bellum ciuile* of Lucan, and, on the invitation of the Cambridge University Press, prepared a second edition of Juvenal.

In 1926, his edition of Lucan led scholars on the Continent to regard Housman as the leading Latinist in Great Britain. In 1930, even though it was realized he would refuse, Housman was at least informally considered for the Poet Laureateship of Great Britain.[21]

* * *

In the evening of April 30th, 1936, Housman died. He was in his 78th year. During his career as poet and scholar, many classicists had been angered by his criticisms; F. R. Leavis and his followers had been annoyed by his Leslie Stephen lecture; and many of the younger poets, identifying him with the older generation, were eager to discover reasons for denigrating and dismissing his work. On the other hand, scholars specialising in verbal criticism and able to recognize ability and talent continued to think well of Housman's technical labors, and the public at large, charmed by his melodious verse, continued to purchase copy after copy of Housman's poetry. But ammunition against him was provided at once to classical scholars, literary critics, and poets by his brother Laurence.

Housman's will included the clause: "I direct my brother, Laurence Housman, to destroy all my prose manuscripts in whatever language, and I permit him but do not enjoin him to select from my verse manuscript writing, and to publish, any poems which appear to him to be completed and to be not inferior to the average of my published poems; and I direct him to destroy all other poems and fragments of verse". These instructions, naturally addressed to a relative, were badly carried out.

In composing a memoir, Laurence included extracts from his brother's classical notebooks, misrepresenting them as generalized attacks awaiting a victim. "If we all knew as little as ___ does, we should doubtless find the classics as easy as he does." "Nature, not content with denying to Mr. ___ the faculty of thought, has endowed him with the faculty of writing." "When ___ has acquired a scrap of misinformation he cannot rest till he has imparted it." This revelation damaged Housman's reputation for honesty; and it played into the hands of those who, preferring literary to textual studies, were troubled because Housman had publicly affirmed that literary critics worthy of the title were extraordinarily rare.[22] And those who had not dared to attack Housman whilst he was alive, or who had been bloodied by him in controversy, were now given ample opportunity to signal their dislike and safely to record their disdain.[23]

---

21. For his rank on the Continent, see A. Bierl/W. M. Calder III/R. L. Fowler, *The Prussian and the Poet. the Letters of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff to Gilbert Murray*, Berlin: Weidmann, 1991, p. 124 with note 553; cf. *op.cit.* p. 67. For the possibility of his becoming Laureate, see H. W. Garrod to Nichol Smith, Apr. 27, 1930 (Merton College, Oxford, Garrod Papers 1:45 p. 4). See also *Letters* p. 296.

22. For Housman's "sentences", see Naiditch, "'The Slashing Style that All Know and Few Applaud': the Invective of A. E. Housman" in *The Greenbank Colloquium on the History of English Classical Scholarship* ed. H. D. Jocelyn (forthcoming); for Notebooks A, X and Y, see *PLW/AEH* pp. 106-113. For this clause of the will, see L. Housman in A. E. Housman, *More Poems*, London: Cape, 1936, p. 7.

23. I adopt the suggestion of E. N. O'Neil (in conversation, 1971/72; *per litt.* Oct. 20, 1995).

With regard to the verse, Laurence relied not on his brother's will but on his memory of a conversation: "he . . . said he wished me to include nothing which I considered inferior to anything that had already appeared. I did not then admit to him that the inclusion in *A Shropshire Lad* of a poem which I thought inferior to the rest would make my task easier than it might otherwise have been". The result was that poems were published which Housman would not have cared to see in print, and personal information made public which, perhaps, Housman had never meant to disclose.[24]

And the nature of some of the poems led many critics to center their attention not on the merits or defects of the verse but on their purportedly autobiographical nature.[25]

The result was that, for many literary critics and for some classical scholars, Housman's work fell from favor; and, for a quarter of a century, scholars and teachers—though not the public at large—ceased to hold his writings in esteem. But, especially from the early 1960s, a resurgence of interest took place in Great Britain and, not much later, in the United States. In 1961, John Carter brought out *A. E. Housman: Selected Prose.* In 1966, Tom Burns Haber *The Making of A Shropshire Lad* and, the following year, a popular account of Housman for the Twayne series. In 1971, Rupert Hart-Davis and Harvard University Press published *The Letters of A. E. Housman*; in 1972, the Cambridge University Press, *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman*; and, in 1973, a Housman Society was brought into existence.[26]

Since then, several biographies of Housman have appeared, as well as books on his verse. In addition, there have been twenty-one volumes of the *Housman Society Journal*; four volumes of the Japanese *A. E. Housman Journal*; a massive attempt to trace the "Critical Heritage" from 1896 to 1951; and, of course, numerous reprints of Housman's *Collected Poems* and *A Shropshire Lad.*

---

24. Laurence had quickly decided that there were sufficient materials to publish (LH to W. Rothenstein, May 12, 1936: Harvard University, Houghton Library, bMs 1148.741 15.) He had a typescript transcription made of complete, or nearly complete, poems, and consulted others as to their merit. (For a copy of the typescript, see Trinity College, Cambridge, Add. Ms. b 120). Laurence, endeavoring to follow instructions, then disbound the four manuscript notebooks; discarded all pages only with unpublished matter; and, cutting up the remainder, pasted it onto sheets. These fragments he then sold for £2,000, to Scribner's, whence it was obtained by the bookseller B. J. Beyer for $13,500, who sold it to Mrs Matthew John Whittall apparently for $40,000. Mrs Whittall donated it to the Library of Congress. There, for purposes of preservation, the fragments were remounted. Not long after T. Burns Haber misled Laurence into supposing he had lost his control over the publication of the fragments and published them himself as *The Manuscript Poems of A. E. Housman.* For the fate of the Notebooks, see J. Carter, *Book Collector* 4, Summer 1955, pp. 110-114; D. A. Randall, *Dukedom Large Enough*, New York 1969, pp. 162-165. Aside from the manuscripts in the Library of Congress, a few survive in the Adelman Collection, Bryn Mawr College, and in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

With regard to Housman's prose writings, Laurence authorised the preservation of the Cambridge lectures (University Library, Cambridge, Add. Mss 6874-6902), for Gow had advised him of the author's verbal decision to allow their survival. Further, Laurence had typescripts prepared of the lectures Housman had delivered to the UCL Literary Society, and gave private readings; then, he undertook to destroy them. One lecture, on Swinburne, was accidentally preserved and, eventually, published: reprinted in A. E. Housman, *Collected Poems and Selected Prose* ed. C. Ricks, London: Penguin, 1988 (see *AEH/UCL* pp. 150-156.) Housman considered depositing in the British Museum an autobiographical note not to be seen for fifty years (*Letters* p. 348).

25. See Randy Lynn Meyer, *A. E. Housman and the Critics*, Dissertation, University of Toledo (Ohio), 1994 (summary in *DAI*-A55108, Feb. 1995, p. 2407 [CD-ROM]).

26. For the Classical Papers, see *PLW/AEH* pp. 145-50; for some of the biographies, see *ibid.* pp. 180-194. For *A. E. Housman: the Critical Heritage* ed. P. Gardner, London/New York: Routledge, 1992, see above footnote 16.

A SELECTION OF EARLY AND ILLUSTRATED EDITIONS OF A SHROPSHIRE LAD

Case 1

The number of copies in the earliest editions of *A Shropshire Lad* ordinarily was small: 500 copies, 1000 copies, 2000 copies and the like. In Great Britain, it was Grant Richards who, by bringing out numerous editions, kept the work before the public at large. For the American market, John Lane at first purchased sheets of British editions, then, in 1906, he had a large number of copies printed. These he issued periodically over the next nine years. Because *A Shropshire Lad* was not copyrighted in the United States, others began to reprint it: Mosher in 1906, Kennerley in 1907, Altemus around 1909 etc.[27]

The earliest "limited", fine-press edition of *A Shropshire Lad* appeared in Maine in 1906; the earliest illustrated edition, by William Hyde, in 1908; the first British limited edition, produced by the Riccardi Press, in 1914. It was probably in 1919 that the first text printed with a preface was published, the preface having been composed by William Stanley Braithwaite, an African-American poet and critic.

(1) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co. Ltd, 1896. Label A. **First Edition, first label, signed by the author, who has added two changes he had introduced into the second 1923 edition. One of about 350 copies, 250 with Label A. This work quickly won the regard of many critics, writers and ordinary readers with poems such as the fortieth:

Into my heart an air that kills
  From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
  What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
  I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
  And cannot come again.

In 1896, the London *Times* reviewer awarded *A Shropshire Lad* a brief, favorable notice, concluding "Mr. Housman has a true sense of the sweetness of country life and of its tragedies too, and his gift of melodious expression is genuine". The *Academy* reviewer declared *A Shropshire Lad* to be "a book that has a hundred claims upon the love of all who are the sincere servants of Poetry". Willa Cather observed "There is something which makes Mr. Housman different from the poets of the time and sets him quite apart; I should say that is largely because he is simply a singer".[28]

UCLA Special Collections: PR 4809 H15s. From the Library of Majl and Carmelita Rosecrans Ewing.

---

27. For the date of Altemus's first edition, usually assigned to ca 1902, see above footnote 1.

28. [Thomas Humphry Ward,] *Times* March 27, 1896, p. 13d, reprinted in *A. E. Housman: the Critical Heritage* ed. P. Gardner, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 58; Norman Gale, *Academy* 1, July 11, 1896, p. 30 = Gardner pp. 68 sq., Cather, *The Home Monthly* Oct. 1897 = *The World and the Parish* ed. W. M. Curtin, Lincoln (Neb.) 1970, p. 358 = *PLW/AEH* p. 98.

(2) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, New York: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1897. Label B, accompanied by Van der Weyde photograph of ca 1894, signed. **First Edition, with cancel titleleaf, signed by the author. Late in 1896, Kegan Paul had the other half of the edition bound, selling some 154 or 162 copies to John Lane with a cancel titleleaf giving his name as publisher in New York.[29]

Private Collection. From the Library of Perry Molstad.

(3) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, London: Grant Richards, 1898. **Second Edition. One of about 500 copies. Richards has recorded his memory of his negotiations with Housman (*Housman 1897-1936*, London 1941, p. 24):

> I recall Housman as having repeated that I might produce the second edition of his book and myself as having remonstrated with him about his refusal to take any share of the profits that in my opinion were sure to accrue to its publisher: "The book will become better and better known. It won't take over two years to sell the second edition. There is bound later on to be a big profit." Housman's reply was to the point . . . "I am not a poet by trade; I am a professor of Latin. I do not wish to make profit out of my poetry. It is not my business."

Richards follows his account with the story that McClure's in America had sent Housman cheques to reprint his poems, and these Housman returned. That story, whilst essentially true, is here anachronistic: it was only later that McClure's sent payment. For his part, Housman was pleased with the sales of the second edition, albeit his instructions concerning its printing were ignored. "The second edition" he wrote to Paul Lemperly "contains nothing new except a few misprints" (first printed, A. E. Newton, *This Book-Collecting Game*, Boston 1928, p. 254; for reprints, see *HSJ* 17, 1991, p. 44).

Private Collection. From the Library of Lydia Scott (April 1899).

(4) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, London: Grant Richards, 1900. **Third Edition. One of about 1000 copies, albeit few copies have survived.

Private Collection.

(5) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, London: Grant Richards, 1903. **Fourth Edition, issued at the close of 1902 in some 2000 copies.

Private Collection.

(6) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, London: Grant Richards, 1904 ("The Smaller Classics"). **Fifth Edition, offered in two formats (in leather, a shilling; in cloth, six pence), the last edition printed by Richards before his first bankruptcy. To the firm which purchased the business, Housman wrote concerning this edition:[30]

> Mr Grant Richards included my book *A Shropshire Lad* in his series of The Smaller Classics without consulting me, and to my annoyance. I contented myself with remonstrating, and did not demand its withdrawal; but now that I have the chance, I take it, and I refuse to allow the book to be any

29. For the statistics, see Naiditch, "The First Edition of *A Shropshire Lad* in Bookshop and Auction Room" *Housman. New Perspectives* edd. A. Holden/R. Birch, London: Macmillan (forthcoming) n. 8.

30. H. to Messrs Alexander Moring, Aug. 17, 1906: Richards p. 73; *Letters* p. 87.

longer included in the series. I hope that you will not be very much aggrieved; but I think it unbecoming that the work of a living author should appear under such a title.

Private Collection.

(7) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, New York: John Lane Company, The Bodley Head, 1906. **The First American Edition, with "*The* | BODLEY | HEAD" at foot of spine. The copy on exhibition is the one that, by its ownership inscription, establishes this printing as the first.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
'Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free.'
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
'The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue.'
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

A Shropshire Lad XIII

Private Collection. From the Library of Esther Everett Lafe (June 1906).[31]

(8) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, London: E. Grant Richards, 1907. **Seventh Edition.

Private Collection. From the Library of Perry Molstad.

(9) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman with a Preface by William Stanley Braithwaite, Boston: The Four Seas Company, 1919. **Second impression.[32]

Private collection.

ILLUSTRATED EDITIONS

Efforts to illustrate Housman reach back to 1908. In that year, at the publisher's desire, William Hyde prepared a series of color-illustrations. They failed to please the author. The next major attempt to illustrate *A Shropshire Lad* was by Claud Lovat Fraser. It left so much to be desired that Housman declined to let it appear with his text.

Probably the most successful attempt at illustration was that by Agnes Miller Parker in Harrap's 1940 edition. The poems, having a rustic element, arguably call for a generally rough form of technique, such as woodcut. On the other hand, the polished nature of Housman's verse requires more sophisticated an art-form. Apparently alive to these issues, Parker prepared wood-engravings.

To date, nearly thirty artists, including Joan Hassall and Paul Landacre, John De Pol and James Thurber, have undertaken to illustrate individual poems or whole works.[33]

---

31. For the first American printing, see *PLW/AEH* p. 118.

32. For Braithwaite, see W. H. Robinson, *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 54.1, Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1987, pp. 3-12.

33. For Housman on Hyde, see *Letters* index with Richards index. Hyde's original blocks are preserved at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. For Housman on Fraser, see *Letters* index with Richards index. Fraser's originals are at Bryn Mawr College. For a list of artists, see *PLW/AEH* p. 210 n. 2.

(10) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, with Eight Illustrations in Colour by William Hyde, London: Grant Richards, [1908]. **First illustrated edition.

Private Collection.

(11) *A Shropshire Lad by A. E. Housman.* Illustrations by Elinore Blaisdell, New York: Illustrated Editions Company, [1932]. **Apparently, the earliest publication of the Blaisdell illustrations. Frontispiece, colored, depicting "The True Lover" (*ASL* LIII). Housman, influenced by the Scottish ballads, describes a woman who, having rejected her lover, discovers herself compelled to come to him at his call; and they embrace.[34]

"Oh lad, what is it lad, that drips
  Wet from your neck on mine?
What is it falling on my lips,
  My lad, that tastes of brine?"

"Oh, like enough 'tis blood, my dear,
  For when the knife has slit
The throat across from ear to ear
  'Twill bleed because of it."

Private Collection.

(12) A. E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad.* Decorations by Edw. A. Wilson, New York: The Heritage Press, 1935. **Frontispiece initialed by artist. The earliest edition of Wilson's illustrations, which were reissued in 1938 and again in 1951.

Private Collection.

(13) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. With Wood Engravings by Agnes Miller Parker, London etc.: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1940. **First Parker edition. Illustrating "The Recruit" (*ASL* III), the poem Housman originally intended to begin his book.

Private Collection. From the Library of Perry Molstad. For the placement of "The Recruit" in *Poems by Terence Hearsay*, see *PLW/AEH* pp. 92 sq.

(14) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Illustrations by Piers Browne, Southampton: Ashford Press, 1988. **Foreword by Kingsley Amis. On display, the illustration to "Loveliest of trees".

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

A Shropshire Lad II

Private Collection.

34. For dating of this edition, see Naiditch in *Housman. New Perspectives* edd. A. Holden/R. Birch, London: Macmillan (forthcoming) n. 33.

LIMITED EDITIONS AND PRIVATE PRINTINGS OF A SHROPSHIRE LAD

Case 2

Housman took no pleasure in limited editions, for these, by their nature, are designed to frustrate the advantage printing has over reproducing books in manuscript. Nor was he ordinarily impressed with bibliophiles, whom he once described as an "idiotic class", a criticism directed at book-collectors whose interest centered not on the content of books but rather on their form. But his friends and acquaintances included several book-collectors, presumably excluded from the general condemnation, because they were scholars in their own right: A. W. Pollard (Keeper of Printed Books in the British Museum), Ingram Bywater (sometime Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford), and Sir Stephen Gaselee (Librarian of the House of Lords). Although Housman regarded a correct text as a book's chief merit, it would be wrong to pretend that he was entirely indifferent to type or margins or paper or bindings. These he regarded as useful in making a book readable, and therefore of ancillary value.

(15) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, Portland (Maine): Thomas B. Mosher, 1906. **The Second American Edition; first Mosher Edition, limited to 925 copies. This printing appears in a variety of formats. In 1913, and again in 1922, Mosher reprinted the text.

Private Collection

(16) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, London: Philip Lee Warner, Publisher to the Medici Society Ld, 1914. **The Riccardi Edition. No. 4 of 1000 copies on paper; twelve copies also were printed on vellum.

Private Collection.

(17) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman, [Chipping Campden: The Alcuin Press, 1929]. **No. 320 of 325 copies.

Private Collection. See below, footnote 38

(18) A. E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad* with Illustrations by Patrick Procktor, London: The Folio Society, 1986.

Private Collection.

(19) A. E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad* with wood-engravings by Nicholas Parry, [Market Drayton, Shropshire:] The Tern Press, 1990. **No. 65 of 225 copies.

Private Collection.

(20) *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Wood engravings by John De Pol, Coffeyville: The Zauberberg Press, 1992. **The colophon reads: "THIS BOOK is one of twenty copies printed by hand on The Perfidious Albion, No. 7039, built by the printer. The type face is Lutetia, 14 D. set with arthritic hands, and printed on dampened Rives, from France, and five copies on Chilham, the final handmade

from Barcham-Green. No comma, nor emendation, has been offered by the scrofulous printer. Designed, edited, printed & bound, by D. von R. Drenner".

Private Collection.

(21) "The Merry Guide" (*ASL* XLII), New York: The Unbound Anthology, The Poets' Guild, [ca 1930?].

Private Collection

(22) "The Carpenter's Son" (*ASL* XLVII), Los Angeles 1931. **Seemingly the only copy known.

UCLA Special Collections PR 4809.H15ca From the Library of Majl Ewing.

(23) "On the idle hill of summer" (*ASL* XXXV). Printed by D. Tinker, Feb. 1985. **One of five copies.

Private Collection.

(24) "With Rue My Heart is Laden" and "Into My Heart", [Pasadena:] The Weatherbird Press, [ca 1991]. **Printed by Vance Gerry, with wood-engravings by Thomas Bewick.

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

A Shropshire Lad LIV

Private Collection.

A SELECTION OF EDITIONS OF LAST POEMS AND RELATED MATTER

(25) *Last Poems* by A. E. Housman, London: Grant Richards, 1922. **First Edition. One of 34 copies sent as gifts on the author's instructions. The present copy was sent to John Masefield, later the Poet Laureate.

Private Collection. From the Library of John Sparrow.

(26) *Last Poems* by A. E. Housman, London: Grant Richards, 1922. **First Edition.

The sigh that heaves the grasses
Whence thou wilt never rise
Is of the air that passes
And knows not if it sighs.
The diamond tears adorning
Thy low mound on the lea,
Those are the tears of mourning,
That weeps, but not for thee.

Last Poems XXVII

UCLA Special Collections: PR 4809.H15l 1922.

POPULARITY

Housman's verse was slow to become popular. But his melodious verse, combined with its military theme, bleak realism and individualistic, courageous outlook, appealed to many during the first World War and after. With the publication of *Last Poems* in 1922, Housman's popularity rose. In this period, tens of thousands of copies of his poems were printed and sold. The price of the first edition of *A Shropshire Lad,* which had only been four pounds in 1919, reached $157.50 in 1923 and, by 1929, $625.00. It was in this period lovers of poetry began regularly to write to Housman. Of course, earlier, admirers had communicated with him.

In 1897, an unknown correspondent began to send him good wishes on his birthday; in 1902, Willa Cather made an unannounced visit to his home in Highgate, London; in 1903, Witter Bynner began his long correspondence with Housman. Housman was, despite his reserve and reluctance to meet new people, amenable to giving pleasure to others by acquiescing in undemanding requests; and he could be charming to those who approached him in the right manner. Thus, to one he wrote: "My heart always warms to people who do not come to see me, especially Americans, to whom it seems to be more of an effort; and your preference of the Cam to the Hudson, which I have always understood to be one of the finest rivers, is also an ingratiating trait. If you think this note a reward, I shall be pleased."[35]

In the later 1920s, when his reputation was highest, he was almost beset by admirers. Some, like John Sparrow and John Carter and Houston Martin and Seymour Adelman, approached him openly. Some, like Charles Wilson, wrote in order to obtain letters to sell; at least one, James George ("Alfred Housman") Leippert, used subterfuge to elicit responses.[36]

(27) Letter to Mr Melvutsky.

Trinity College
Cambridge
England
18 Dec. 1929

Dear Mr Melvutsky,

I think Mr Rubin asked me the same question, and I replied that authors do not know which are their best works and therefore had better not have opinions on the subject. If you prefer *Last Poems* you agree with Masefield and Mrs Wharton.

Yours sincerely

A. E. Housman.

UCLA Special Collections: Ms. 100 box 45. Melvutsky and Arnold Rubin (who corresponded with Housman from 1928 to 1932) are unknown.

35. See L. Housman, *A. E. H.*, London 1937, pp. 136 sq. and *Letters* pp. 47 sq.; I conjecture that this individual learnt Housman's birthday from the 1897 *Who's Who*. E. K. Brown/Leon Edel, *Willa Cather*, 1953: New York: Avon, 1980, index. *Thirty Housman Letters to Witter Bynner* ed. T. B. Haber, New York 1957. H. to Neilson Abeel, Oct. 4, 1935: Abeel, *Forum and Century* 96, Oct. 1936, p. 192; *Letters* p. 377. I have altered the paragraphing.

36. For Charles Wilson, see my commendation of Henry Maas at *PLW/AEH* pp. 161 sq. For the exposure of Leippert, see *ibid* pp. 39-41.

(28) Cutting of the first printing of "Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries", the London *Times* Oct. 31, 1917, p. 7.

These, in the day when heaven was falling,
The hour when earth's foundations fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
And took their wages and are dead.

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
And saved the sum of things for pay.

Last Poems XXXVII

Private Collection.

POSTHUMOUSLY PUBLISHED VERSE

Case 3

Following his brother's death, Laurence quickly concluded that there were sufficient materials to publish a new volume. He had a typescript transcription made of complete, or nearly complete, poems, and consulted G. M. Trevelyan, F. L. Lucas and A. S. F. Gow as to their merit; and he then made a selection, published as *More Poems*. The following year, Laurence ignored the advice he had earlier solicited and published all of the remaining poems and principal fragments, save one, in his memoir as "Additional Poems". The notebooks themselves, Laurence partly destroyed, selling the remainder to Scribner's.[37]

(29) [John Carter,] *The Poetical Manuscripts of A. E. Housman* (Annotated typescript draft). **The final version of Carter's analysis accompanied the fragmentary notebooks to New York and, eventually, to the Library of Congress. The present draft has been annotated by Carter and especially by David Randall, both then of Scribner's.

Private Collection. From the Library of P. B. Morris.

(30) *More Poems* by A. E. Housman, London: Jonathan Cape, [1936]. **Duplicate Proof for Retention, dated "Oct. 16".

Private Collection. The actual marked proof itself survives in the Adelman Collection, Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania (R.B.R. PR 4809.H15 A68 1936); another unmarked proof exists in another private collection.

(31) *More Poems* by A. E. Housman, London: Jonathan Cape, [1936]. **No. 284 of 379 copies.

I to my perils
Of cheat and charmer
Came clad in armour
By stars benign.
Hope lies to mortals
And most believe her,
But man's deceiver
Was never mine.

The thoughts of others
Were light and fleeting,
Of lovers' meeting
Or luck or fame.
Mine were of trouble,
And mine were steady,
So I was ready
When trouble came.

More Poems VI

Private Collection.

37. For the disposal of the Notebooks, see above, footnote 24.

(32) *Stars* [by] A. E. Housman, Paris: [Imprimerie du Trocadéro,] 1969. **This reprint of *More Poems* VII is lettered "X" and is one of ten copies, signed by Frederic Prokosch. Prokosch, a noted novelist, had had small editions of individual poems printed, with false dates, then sold them. In the present copy, the place and date of printing are on a cancel covering the false imprint "Venice 1939". His imposture was exposed in September 1972, and as evidence of repentance, he pasted on correction slips.[37] Later, from 1982-1984, Prokosch issued very limited editions of individual poems, which he copied by hand on printed forms. These included poems such as Housman's "Loveliest of trees". Each appeared in an edition of five under the imprint of the Prometheus Press.

Private Collection.

(33) *Collected Poems* by A. E. Housman, London: Jonathan Cape, 1939. **First Edition (second state), edited by John Carter.[39] Housman strongly objected to the idea that *A Shropshire Lad* and *Last Poems* should be bound together. Indeed, when he received a press-cutting from the *New York Times* implying that such had been done by the authorized American publisher, he wrote to the Society of Authors to see whether he could force them to withdraw the volume. In the event, the rumor was false. During Housman's lifetime, two editions included both books. In 1929, H. P. R. Feinberg was allowed to publish a fine-press edition of both books at the Alcuin Press, and deliberately flouted Housman's wishes by issuing some of his copies in a single volume. The Braille edition likewise brought the two volumes together.[40]

After Housman's death, since his principal poems had appeared in four different volumes, Laurence decided to allow his poetry to be brought together in one volume. Since 1939, Housman's *Collected Poems* has likewise remained continuously in print both in the United States and in Great Britain.

Private Collection.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

Case 4

"It seems hardly fair that the same man should be such a scholar and such a poet."[41] Housman's standing as a classical scholar is higher even than his standing as a poet. As a scholar, he is regarded as one of the three greatest classicists in the history of Great Britain. This was indicated, for example, by C. O. Brink in his book *English Classical Scholarship: Historical Reflections on Bentley, Porson, and Housman*, only a decade ago.

Following his failure at Oxford, Housman divided his time about equally between problems in Greek and Latin. With his appointment to the Latin Chair at University College, he began to limit himself almost entirely to Latin writers from Lucretius to Juvenal.

---

38 See Nicolas Barker, *The Butterfly Books*, London: Bertram Rota, 1987, pp. 173-75, 230.

39. The first state seems to survive only in two copies: the copyright volume in the British Library, Carter's own copy at the Lilly Library.

40. See AEH to Holt, Jan. 4, 1925; Holt to Housman, Jan. 16, 1925; H to Holt, Feb. 2, 1925: Princeton University, New Jersey, Henry Holt Archive; LH to H. Thring, Jan. 12 and 16, 1925: *Letters* pp. 225 sq. For the ordinary Alcuin edition, see above no. 17; for a copy of the Braille edition, see the William White Collection, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

41. J. D. Duff to E. H. Blakeney, March 16, 1931. British Library, Add. Ms. 48980 ff. 57 sq = *PLW/AEH* pp. 46 sq.

(34) Draft notes for a letter on the Corpus Tibullianum. Undated, and without clear and certain means available for assigning to a particular year. The handwriting seems to belong to the first decade of the twentieth century. Possibly sent to J. P. Postgate (1853/1926).[42] Two extracts are provided:

<I 4> 81 *heu heu* is at any rate as old as Virgil's cod. Romanus; but the prevalence of *heu heu* in the late and bad MSS of Tibullus, and the way it dwindles and gives place to *eheu* when you ascend to older and better MSS like Ovid's and Horace's, is striking and I think significant. Then look at passages like Prop. II 24 20 sq., Sil. XI 212, Stat. Ach. I 68, where the best or best-spelling MSS give *eheu* and others have *heu heu*. Even in Tibullus we once find *heheu*, which may be a true form, as it occurs in the Palatine of Virgil buc. 8.58 and in several other places.

III 6 19-21 *siqua est* is right I think. In praying a god not to do hurt to you, it was usual to suggest that he should hurt some one [*sic*] else, because, gods being what they are they can hardly be expected to be happy unless they are hurting somebody. Lygdamus recommends Bacchus to persecute his old enemy Agaue, but hints rather humorously that there may be no such person: Propertius III 24 19 expresses similar doubt about Mens Bona.

UCLA Special Collecions: coll. 1501 box 1 folder 5 (Majl Ewing).

(35) Letter to Robinson Ellis (1834/1913).[43]

University of London.
University College
1 May 1907

Dear Mr Ellis,

Loewe's collation of the cod. Matr. M 31 of Manilius has been sent over from Goettingen and is now in the library of this college, where it will remain till midsummer. I send you word of this in case you may wish to consult it; or I should be very pleased to give you any information about it.

I am yours very truly

A. E. Housman.

UCLA Special Collections: Ms. 100 box 45. From the Library of C. K. Ogden.

(36) Postcard to Stephen Gaselee (1882/1943), of Magdalene College, Cambridge.

What I should have said and thought I was saying is that the hiatus of monosyllables occurs only in the 2nd syllable of the dactyl and that *in that place* the hiatus of words other than monosyllables does not occur, – the only exceptions being in proper names, *Panopeaĕ et, Ennĭ insignis*. Hiatus like *etesiaĕ esse* occurs even where there is no Greek word, *ualĕ inquit*, and probably Lucr. 6.743 *remigĭ oblitae*.

Yrs

12 Feb. 1913 A. E. Housman.

UCLA Special Collections: Ms. 100 box 72.

42. For Housman and Postgate, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 74-91; *PLW/AEH* pp. 217, 220.

43. For Housman and Ellis, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 32-52; *PLW/AEH* pp 216, 219. Ellis had published extensive, if inaccurate, extracts from the codex Matritensis of Manilius.

(37) Offprint of A. E. Housman's "The Manuscripts of Propertius", *Journal of Philology* 21, 1892, pp. 101-160. **In 1891, whilst still a clerk at the Patent Office, Housman completed a critical work called *The Manuscripts of Propertius*. With Postgate as sponsor, he submitted it to the Cambridge University Press. The Syndics of the Press declined it, recommending instead that it be published as a series of articles in the *Journal of Philology*.[44] After Housman's death, his friend and colleague A. S. F. Gow gave away his offprints.

UCLA Special Collections: PA 6141 H817a v. 1

(38) A. E. Housman, edition of Ovid's "Ibis", *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum* ed. I. P. Postgatius, Londinii: sumptibus G. Bell et filiorum, 1894. **First edition. Late in 1891, Postgate entrusted Housman with the task of editing Ovid's Ibis, and this work, Housman's first published edition of a classical text, duly appeared three years later.[45]

Private Collection.

(39) *Cornelii Taciti historiarum libri qui supersunt. The Histories of Tacitus with Introduction, Notes, and an Index by the Rev. W. A. Spooner*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1891. **In 1892, Housman was elected to the Latin chair at University College, London. This book was one he used in teaching. It was his custom to mark in the margins the names of the students on whom he meant to call to translate and to parse. In the present book appear the names of his students Gerald Gould, the poet, and Annette M. B. Meakin, latterly a traveller and writer.

Private Collection.

(40) *M. Manilii astronomicon liber primus* recensuit et enarrauit A. E. Housman, London: Grant Richards, 1903. **First edition. One of 400 copies. Label B.[46] This, Housman's first printed classical book, was (as usual) published at his own expense.

UCLA Special Collections: 84563 v. 1. From the libraries of Robinson Ellis; Stephen Gaselee; and C. K. Ogden.

(41) Robinson Ellis, review of Housman's edition of Manilius' book I, *Hermathena* 30, 1904, pp. 1-14.

UCLA Special Collections: PN 2 H42 vol. 30.

(42) *D. Iunii Iuuenalis saturae* editorum in usum A. E. Housman, Londinii: apud E. Grant Richards, 1905. **First separate edition. One of 400 copies. Like the Manilius before it, the Juvenal includes much trenchant criticism of Housman's contemporaries.

> A hundred years ago it was their rule to count the MSS and trust the majority. But this pillow was snatched from under them by the great critics of the 19th century, and the truth that MSS must be weighed, not counted, is now too widely known to be ignored. The sluggard has lost his pillow, but he has kept his nature, and must needs find something else to loll on; so he fabricates, to suit the change of season, his precious precept of following one MS wherever possible. Engendered by infirmity and designed for comfort, no wonder if it misses the truth at which it was never aimed.

44. For the history of the book, see *AEH/UCL* p. 77. This first article is usually misdated 1893: see *PLW/AEH* p. 149.

45. For the date of the assignment, see *PLW/AEH* pp. 73 sq.

46. The earlier label: see *PLW/AEH* pp. 119-121. For Housman's Manilius, see G. P. Goold in *A. E. Housman. New Perspectives* edd. Birch and Holden, London: Macmillan (forthcoming).

Its aim was purely humanitarian: to rescue incompetent editors alike from the toil of editing and from the shame of acknowledging that they cannot edit.

Private Collection.

(42) *M. Annaei Lucani belli ciuilis libri decem* editorum in usum edidit A. E. Housman, Oxonii: apud Basilium Blackwell, 1926. **First edition.

(43) *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* vol. I fasc. V, Lipsiae: in aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1902, column 966. **Housman had little respect for this dictionary. In 1911, concerning a lexicographer who followed the current fashionable text of Juvenal, he remarked:[47]

Who was the first and chief Latin writer to use the Greek word for a cat, αἴλουροσ?[48] The answer to this question can be found in many Latin dictionaries, but not in the latest and most elaborate. The five greatest universities of Germany have combined their resources to produce a *thesaurus linguae Latinae*, whose instalments, published during the last 12 years, run to 6000 pages, and have brought it down to the letter D. The part containing *aelurus* appeared in 1902; it cites the word from Gellius, from Pelagius, and from the so-called Hyginus; but it does not cite it from the 15th satire of Juvenal. Here we find illustrated a theme on which historians and economists have often dwelt, the disadvantage of employing slave-labour. In Germany in 1902 the inspired text of Juvenal was the text of Buecheler's second edition. That edition was published in the last decade of the 19th century, when the tide of obscurantism, now much abated, was at its height, and when the cheapest way to win applause was to reject emendations which everyone had hitherto accepted and to adopt lections from the MSS which no one had yet been able to endure. Buecheler, riding on the crest of the wave, had expelled from the text the conjecture, as it then was, *aeluros*, and restored the *caeruleos* of the MSS. That was enough for the chain-gangs working at the dictionary in the ergastulum at Munich: theirs not to reason why. That every other editor for the last three centuries, and that Buecheler himself in his former edition, had printed *aeluros*, they consigned to oblivion; they provided this vast and expensive lexicon with an article on *aelurus* in which Juvenal's name did not occur. . . .[49] Everyone can figure to himself the mild inward glow of pleasure and pride which the author of this unlucky article felt while he was writing it, and the peace of mind with which he said to himself, when he went to bed that night, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'[50]

Private Collection. From the library of A. S. F. Gow (1887-1978).

---

47. *D. Iunii Iuuenalis saturae*. Edidit in usum editorum A. E. Housman, 1931: Cambridge 1956, pp. lv sq. Housman declined to have his Cambridge inaugural published because he was unable to verify a statement he had made concerning the text of a poem by Shelley. A typescript copy of the lecture, made for Laurence Housman, was discovered and identified by John Carter late in 1967, and published by him and John Sparrow. See A. E. Housman, *The Confines of Criticism*, Cambridge: University Press, 1969. For a slightly more correct version of the text, see A. E. Housman, *Collected Poems and Selected Prose* ed Christopher Ricks, London: Penguin Books, 1988, pp. 296-313, with note on p. 506.

48. Housman regularly used a medial for a terminal signa: see *PLW/AEH* p. 46 nn. 1-2.

49. Iuuen. XV 7-8 "illic aeluros, hic piscem fluminis, illic | oppida tota canem uenerantur, nemo Dianam". *aeluros* was conjectured by Johannes Brodaeus (1500-1563), and discovered in the Vatican manuscript, Urb. lat. 661 (s. XI inc.): "illicelu**s U (e in o mutato et supra scripto serpentes, ut corrector uoluisse uideatur *colubras*)" (Housman). The "best manuscript" gives *illicaeruleos*; others, *illic caeruleos*. For Housman's use of the Vatican manuscript, which was examined on his behalf by E. O. Winstedt and Georges Périnelle, see *The Classical Papers of Gilbert Highet* ed. R. J. Ball, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, pp. 291 sq.

50. The author of the article was Friedrich Vollmer (1867-1923). For Vollmer, see Hans Rubenbauer, *Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* 202, 1925 (*Biographisches Jahrbuch* 44), pp. 68-103.

(45) Letter to Stephen Gaselee, a gourmet with whom Housman dined. **Housman, aside from his interest in the classics and literature, took pleasure in food and wine. When he could afford to do so, he began annual visits to the Continent, especially to France, to dine in fine restaurants and to examine ecclesiastical architecture. Thus, in Paris, he regularly visited La Tour d'Argent, where Fédéric created "Barbue Housman" in his honor.[51]

In 1930, Housman was completing the fifth and final volume of his edition of Manilius, albeit in 1932 he produced as well an editio minor of this astrological poet.

Trinity College
Cambridge
4 Aug. 1930

Dear Gaselee,

I am going away on Saturday and had intended to be absent about 3 weeks, so that I can be back on the 30th to swallow your fragrant bait.

I have abstained from getting the book you mention because it might conceivably, though not probably, delay me a bit in getting out my last book of Manilius. If it sticks to Nonnus, it cannot go much into the technical minutiae of astrology, and therefore will not be formidable in that respect.[52]

Yours sincerely

A. E. Housman.

UCLA Special Collections: Ms. 100 box 72.

(46) Letter to Arnold Rubin.

Trinity College
Cambridge
England
1 March 1931

Dear Mr Rubin,

I am glad to have news of you, and interested to hear that you have returned from North Carolina. As you ask about my doings I may say that I have published the 5th and last volume of my chief work, an edition of the Latin astrological poet Manilius. I do not send you a copy, as it would shock you very much; it is so dull that few professed scholars can read it, probably not one in the whole United States. But I rank much higher among English scholars than among English poets.

Yours faithfully

A. E. Housman.

UCLA Special Collections: Ms. 100 box 45.

(47) *Application to the Electors to the Corpus Professorship of Latin from Eduard Fraenkel*, s.l. (1934). **In 1926, Wilamowitz's student Fraenkel reviewed Housman's edition of Lucan in *Gnomon*. It was a lengthy critique, and led others in Germany to re-evaluate Housman's work and to conclude that he was the leading Latinist in Great Britain. In 1934, Fraenkel, like many of Jewish origin, found it necessary to leave Germany. Temporary shelter was afforded him in Cambridge. In this same year, the Latin Chair in Oxford became vacant, and Fraenkel was a candidate, with Housman as one of his sponsors. "I cannot say sincerely that I wish Dr. Fraenkel to obtain the Corpus Professorship, as I would rather that he should be my successor in Cambridge." When a commentator complained at the appointment

51. For the recipe, see Naiditch, "Miscellanea Housmanniana" *Housman Society Journal* 21, 1995, pp. 8-10.

52. Probably, Viktor Stegemann, *Astrologie und Universalgeschichte: Studien und Interpretationen zu den Dionysiaka des Nonnos von Panopolis*, Leipzig/Berlin 1930.

of a foreigner, Fraenkel's supporters at Oxford summoned Housman to make a public response on Fraenkel's behalf; and his dismissal of the criticism ended that controversy.

UCLA Special Collections: collection 1551 box 21: no. 823.

ENGLISH PROSE

Case 5

In 1892, evaluating Housman's candidacy for the Latin Chair at University College, London, W. P. Ker observed: "That Mr Housman is more than a formal commentator is proved by the attractive style of his essays".[53] In the years that followed Housman was called upon to compose letters variously on behalf of the Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge, and on behalf of the University of Cambridge.[54] They are models of their kind, their tone and meaning combining with their rhythm and diction to produce highly effective statements. But it was his essays, in the prefaces to his editions and in his published lectures, that especially excited admiration. In 1931, Herbert Read and Bonamy Dobrée included an extract from Housman's Manilius in their *Anthology of English Prose*. The first anthology dedicated solely to Housman's prose appeared thirty years later.

(48) A. E. Housman, *Introductory Lecture delivered before the Faculties of Arts and Laws and of Science in University College, London, October 3, 1892*, Cambridge: Printed at the University Press, 1933. **One of 100 copies. "No. 32, for Tom Balston from John Carter". This lecture, designed to reconcile the conflicting claims of the sciences and the humanities by affirming that all investigations are good, was highly applauded. Indeed, later in the year, as a fitting Christmas present for Housman, it was suggested by the students that he be given "Opportunity for another good speech".[55]

It was characteristic of Housman that he fitted his talks to the audience. Popular talks, such as his addresses to the University College Literary Society, were polished and witty. But technical lectures to students were dry and competent—even so, "when [R. W. Chambers] told an American classical teacher something of the careful tuition I had received from [Housman] in 1892-4 . . . she said 'I feel as if I was sitting next to somebody who had touched God'".[56]

Private Collection.

(49) A. E. Housman, "Cambridge Inaugural", *Times Literary Supplement* no. 3454, May 9, 1968, p. 475. **First printing.

Private Collection.

---

53. *AEH/UCL* p. 11.

54. Housman's chief formal letters are reprinted in A. E. Housman, *Selected Prose* ed. J. Carter, Cambridge 1962 ed. 2, pp. 161-167 (= *The Name and Nature of Poetry and other Selected Prose*, New York: New Amsterdam, 1989), which also includes his 1892 lecture, "The Application of Thought to Textual Criticism", and *The Name and Nature of Poetry*. For these lectures, together with the Cambridge inaugural and the talk on Swinburne, see most conveniently A. E. Housman, *Collected Poems and Selected Prose* ed. C. Ricks, London: Penguin, 1988.

55. *Privateer* 1.6, Dec. 7, 1892, p. 6.

56. *AEH/UCL* p. 123, where the teacher is identified as a Miss Deakers. For Chambers's copy of *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, see below, no. 53.

(50) [A. E. Housman,] *Address to Sir James George Frazer, LL.D., D.C.L., Litt.D., on the Occasion of the Foundation, in his honour, of the Frazer Lectureship in Social Anthropology in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, and Liverpool,* [Printed at S. Dominic's Press, Ditchling,] 1921.

> The friends and admirers who have united to found in your honour an annual lectureship in Social Anthropology, a science requiring no such link to connect it with your name, are not altogether content to set up their monument and withdraw in silence. They feel, and they hope that you will understand, the wish to approach more nearly an author whose works have bound to him in familiarity and affection even those to whom he is not personally known, and to indulge, by this short address, an emotion warmer than mere intellectual gratitude.
>
> The Golden Bough, compared by Virgil to the mistletoe but now revealing some affinity to the banyan, has not only waxed a great tree but has spread to a spacious and hospitable forest, whose king receives homage in many tongues from a multitude resorting thither for its fruit or timber or refreshing shade. There they find learning mated with literature, labour disguised in ease, and a museum of dark and uncouth superstitions invested with the charm of a truly sympathetic magic. . . .[57]
>
> UCLA URL GN 21 F86A22. From the library of C. K. Ogden.

(51) *Nine Essays* by Arthur Platt. With a Preface by A. E. Housman, Cambridge: University Press, 1927. **In 1894, the Greek Professor at University College, London, resigned. A committee was formed to select his successor, the report for which was composed by Housman. The committee recommended the appointment of J. Arthur Platt (1860-1925); the Council agreed; and Platt became Housman's colleague and admired friend (*Nine Essays* pp. ix sq.):

> If his contemporaries rated him, both comparatively and absolutely, below his true position in the world of learning, the loss was chiefly theirs, but the blame was partly his. He had much of the boy in his composition, and something even of the schoolboy. His conversation in mixed company was apt to be flighty, and his writing, though it was not so, carried jauntiness of manner to some little excess. Those who judge weight by heaviness were perplexed and deceived by a colloquial gaiety, much less unseemly indeed than the frolic sallies of Dawes, but striking more sharply on the sense because not draped like them in the Latin toga; and it was disturbing to meet with a scholar who carried his levity, where others carry their gravity, on the surface, and was austere, where he might without offence or detection have been frivolous, in conducting the operations of his mind.
>
> Private Collection.

(52) Letter to Arnold Rubin.

Trinity College
Cambridge
England
17 Nov. 1929

Dear Mr Rubin,

Assuming that you have to earn your living, I advise you to follow chemistry or any other honest trade rather than literature, which, as Scott said, may be a good walking-stick, but is a bad crutch. It cannot be depended on. Maurice Hewlett, when his novels were selling well, threw up a post in the Civil Service, intending to live by his pen: the public ceased to read his novels, and he died in poverty.

---

57. For Housman and Frazer, see Robert Ackerman, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 15, 1974, pp. 339-364 with *PLW/AEH* pp. 165 sq).

And of all forms of literature, poetry is the straightest way to starvation. There is one living poet who boasts that he lives on the proceeds of his poetry, but he is a bad one. Moreover poetry is not a job to fill all one's time, and poets like Wordsworth and Byron, who were always writing, would have done better to write less.

Others have asked me the same question, and I always give the same reply.[58]

Yours sincerely

A. E. Housman.

UCLA Special Collections: Ms. 100 box 45.

(53) A. E. Housman, *The Name and Nature of Poetry*, Cambridge: University Press, 1933. **First edition. **Housman's popularity began to decline in the first part of 1929.[59] With this lecture however, which F. R. Leavis and I. A. Richards of the Cambridge School of English regarded as an attack upon themselves (Housman reported them complaining that "it will take us more than twelve years to undo the harm I have done in an hour"), Housman came to be regarded by the new generation of poets as representative of the old-guard, and therefore to be denigrated.[60] The old-guard meanwhile saw in this lecture an eloquent defence of lyrical, metrical, poetical verse. "The Times summary was, we found, eagerly read and cherished by all sorts and conditions of people whom we had never suspected of an interest in such matters. It was like a bugle-call, or the All-Clear signal after an air-raid: the population stirred again, saving 'Thank Heaven that's over!' For, during at least ten years, the field of poetry and of poetical criticism has been invaded by swarms of people who haven't the least conception as to what poetry is. . . ."[61] Housman himself bitterly disliked this lecture.

Following Housman's death in 1936, the modern critics he had affronted and the young poets, especially those who had abandoned metre, began regularly to dismiss him and his work. The two went together: Laurence, his brother, had published verse that was not up to Housman's high standard and had, in his memoir, damaged his reputation by various "revelations".

But the dismissal and contempt came chiefly from the critics: the ordinary reader, conscious of the pleasure that *A Shropshire Lad* afforded, continued to read Housman.

Private Collection. From the Library of Housman's pupil at University College, R. W. Chambers, the editor of Beowulf.

HUMOR

Case 6

Housman's humor is often wry and ruthless. From his childhood Housman created amusing verse. His family was accustomed to play a game, "Nouns and Questions", in which one was obliged to answer a question in verse whilst including some special, if untoward, terms. His comic verse, of which about

58. A similar letter survives to Mr Wilensky, June 6, 1931 (Yale University, Beinecke Library, Ms. Vault Housman).

59. See Naiditch, "The First Edition of *A Shropshire Lad* in Bookshop and Auction Room" *Housman: New Perspectives* edd. A. Holden/R. Birch, London: Macmillan (forthcoming).

60. H. to L. Housman, May 20, 1933: L. Housman, *A E.H.*, London 1937, p. 185 = *Letters* p. 335.

61. J. C. Squire, *London Mercury* 28, June 1933, reprinted in Philip Gardner, *A. E. Housman: the Critical Heritage*, London/New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 238 sq. It is to be noted that T. S. Eliot admired the lecture where his followers did not.

seventy pieces survive, often appears in anthologies, and has recently been partly collected in *Unkind to Unicorns.*[62]

Housman's humor is not limited to his verse. His formal prose compositions also are often enlivened with remarks designed to amuse the reader, usually however at the expense of another scholar. For example, he concluded a review of W. J. Stone's *On the Use of Classical Metres in English* thus:[63]

> The long and short of the matter is this. We now regulate English verse by the strong and determinate element of stress: its management is what distinguishes verse from prose. The weak and indeterminate element of quantity we subordinate: its management is one of the many things which distinguish, not verse from prose, but good verse from bad. Mr Stone proposes that we should put the weak to the work of the strong, and subject the strong to the predominance of the weak. Summer is come, and cricket is playing everywhere. If Mr Stone will accost the next eleven he sees in the field, and advise them to run after the ball on their hands and pick it up with their feet, he will hear some very good criticism of his quantitative hexameters.

And, often enough, in the middle of the humorous statement, there will be an original observation that advances knowledge of the subject particularly in hand.

(54) A. E. Housman, *A Morning with the Royal Family. Illustrated by Frederick Childs,* Los Angeles: The Green Horn Press, 1941. **Printed by Mary Treanor and Robin Park in 125 copies. This *jeu d'esprit* was composed around Christmas 1879 and published, without the author's leave, in *The Bromsgrovian* of 1882. The Headmaster cancelled one chapter, on the state religion of the Kingdom, and arranged for two offending words to be covered with slips carrying more innocuous terms.[64] Many years later, Housman created a brief sequel, "An Afternoon with the Royal Family", not yet published.[65]

UCLA Special Collections: 105729.

(55) Mrs E. W. Symons, *Memories of A. E. Housman*, Bath: J. Grant Melluish, 1936. **Pamphlet, reprinted from *The Edwardian*, including the [first] publication of her brother's pleasant verse —

Amelia mixed some mustard,
  She mixed it strong and thick;
She put it in the custard
  And made her mother sick.
And showing satisfaction
  By many a loud huzza,
"Observe," said she, "the action
  Of mustard on mamma."

UCLA Special Collections: PR 4809 H15 S9 1936.

---

62. The principal publications including Housman's light verse include *Ye Rounde Table,* Oxford 1878 (cf. T. Burns Haber, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 61, 1962, pp. 797 sqq.); K. E. Symons (ed.), *Alfred Edward Housman: Recollections,* New York 1937; L. Housman, *A. E. H.*, London 1937; F. B. Drew in [D. A. Randall,] *A. E. Housman. Exhibition April 1-30, 1961*, Bloomington, Ind. Lilly Library, 1961, and John Pugh, *Bromsgrove and the Housmans*, Bromsgrove 1974. For Housman's humor, see also N. Marlow, *A. E. Housman: Scholar and Poet,* London 1958, pp. 171-179.

63. *Classical Review* 13, 1899, p. 319 = *The Classical Papers of A. E. Housman* edd. Diggle/Goodyear, Cambridge 1972, p. 488 etc.

64. Housman to D. A. Slater, Jan. 12, 1932: Adelman Collection, Bryn Mawr College. Cf. J. Carter and J. Sparrow, *A. E. Housman: an Annotated Hand-list,* London 1952, no. 4 = W. White, *A. E. Housman: a Bibliography,* Godalming 1982, no. 71.

65. Manuscript, New York Public Library, Berg Collection; copy, St John's College, Oxford, Housman Cabinet II (Sparrow Collection).

(56) A. E. Housman, *The Parallelogram The Amphisbaena The Crocodile*, Los Angeles: [Jake Zeitlin,] 1941. **These three poems, originally published in the *U. C. L. Union Magazine*, were privately reissued by the Department of English of University College London and, independently, by William White in this limited printing. Although nominally limited to 250 copies, in fact only about 85 copies were produced by Grant Dahlstrom. The poems are illustrated by a wood engraving by Paul Landacre.

UCLA Special Collections: PR 4809.H15p.

(57) [A. E. Housman,] "Fragment of a Greek Tragedy", *High School Chronicle*, Sydney (Australia) March 1917, pp. 27-28. **In Housman's time students were expected to translate Greek and Latin texts into English and English into Latin and Greek. Few were talented or capable in these exercises, and Housman parodied a student's translating "through a brick wall" in his Aeschylean "Fragment of a Greek Tragedy", which in its second version commences with the Chorus enquiring:[66]

> O suitably attired in leather boots
> Head of a traveller, wherefore seeking whom
> Whence by what way how purposed art thou come
> To this well-nightingaled vicinity?
> My object in inquiring is to know.
> But if you happen to be deaf and dumb
> And do not understand a word I say,
> Nod with your hand to signify as much.

This parody, famous amongst those with a classical education, has been often reprinted. For his own part, Housman rarely sought to compose poetry in Latin, albeit his Propertian dedication to M. J. Jackson in the first volume of the Manilius is highly regarded.[67] In his Cambridge inaugural Housman discussed "composition" and, as was his custom, at once showed that it was commended for unsatisfactory reasons and that it deserved a measure of praise on another account entirely.[68]

Private Collection.

(58) Laurence Housman, *A. E. H.*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1937, pp. 245-247. **At University College, Housman allowed himself to be persuaded to present lectures to the Literary Society. These lectures have mostly perished, in accordance with their author's desire: a fragment of the paper on Matthew Arnold, was published in 1961; one complete talk, on Swinburne, was discovered in 1969 in typescript, and published.

---

66. See Ralph Marcellino, *Classical Journal* 48, Feb. 1953, pp. 171-178, 188

67. Reprinted, with an English translation by Edmund Wilson, in A. E. Housman, *Collected Poems and Selected Prose* ed C. Ricks, London 1988, pp. 253-255. It was, I believe, G. P. Goold who first remarked the Propertian rhythms.

68. *Ibid.* p. 297, with correction of text: "In the nineteenth century Greek and Latin verse was written in England, and especially in Cambridge, better than it had been written anywhere in Europe since classical antiquity itself; but meanwhile the most important additions of the nineteenth century to our knowledge of Greek and Latin metre were made, not in England, but in Germany. That is what history has to say about the fabulous virtues of the exercise; and indeed, quite apart from history, it stands to reason that you are not likely to discover laws of metre by composing verses in which you occasionally break those laws because you have not yet discovered them. But there was the less need for fable, because verse-translation has other titles to honour which are not simply legendary"; and these he identifies.

From Housman's lecture on Erasmus Darwin was published, in the College paper, a "FRAGMENT OF A DIDACTIC POEM ON LATIN GRAMMAR":

See on the cliff fair Adjectiva stand,
Roll the blue eye and wave the ivory hand;
Her amber locks refulgent emeralds deck
And orient sapphires wind her whiter neck.
She marks afar the much-loved youth pursue
O'er verdant meads the bounding kangaroo:
' 'Tis he! 'tis he! your wings, ye zephyrs, give!
Waft, waft me, breezes, to my Substantive!'
She speaks, and, headlong from the dizzy height,
Prone to the plain precipitates her flight.
Three nymphs attend her in the airy chase,
The nymphs of Number, Gender, and of Case;
The vine, the myrtle, and the rose they twine,
To bind thy victim, Concord, to the thrine.
The startled swain, in momentary dread,
As the fond fair descends upon his head,
Shouts: the high rocks his lusty outcry swell
And teach the obedient echoes how to yell.
Barks the pleased hound, spectator of the sport,
And hippopotami forget to snort.
On dove-borne car descends the Cyprian queen,
And hovering Cupids mitigate the scene.
The enamoured pair confesss their mutual flame,
In gender, number, and in case the same;
Embowering roses screen their transports fond,
And simpering Syntax waves her jewelled wand.

So, up the steep side of the rugged hill,
Companions in adventure, Jack and Jill
With footing nice and anxious effort hale
To the moist pump the necessary pail.
The industrious pair their watery task divide,
And woo the bashful Naiad side by side.
The sturdier swain, for arduous labour planned,
The handle guiding in his practised hand,
With art hydraulic and propulsion stout
Evokes the crystal treasure from the spout,
The maid attentive to the useful flow,
Adjusts the apt receptacle below;
The gelid waves with bright reflections burn,
And mirrored beauty blushes in the urn.
Now down the slope, their task accomplished, they
The liquid plunder of the pump confey,
And seek the level sward; incautious pair!
Too soon, alas, too soon shall ye be there.
The hero first the strong compulsion feels,
And finds his head supplanted by his heels;
In circles whirled he thunders to the plain,
Vain all his efforts, all his language vain,
Vain his laced boots and vain his eyebrow dark,
And vain, ah! vain, his vaccination mark.
The inverted pail his flying form pursues,
With humid tribute and sequacious dews:
(So, through affrighted skies, o'er nations pale,
Behind the comet streams the comet's tail).
The prudent fair, of equilibrium vain,
Views, as he falls, the rotatory swain.
Exhilaration heaves her bosom young,
Tilts the fine nose, protrudes the vermeil tongue,
Bids from her throat the silvery laughter roll
And cachinnations strike the starry pole.
Gnomes! her light foot your envious fingers trip,
And freeze the titter on the ruby lip;
The massy earth with strong attraction draws,
And Venus yields to gravitation's laws;
From rock to rock the charms of Beauty bump,
And shrieks of anguish chill the conscious pump.

UCLA Special Collections: PR 4809.H15 H8. For Housman's lectures, see *AEH/UCL* pp. 144-152.

(59) *Unkind to Unicorns: Selected Comic Verse of A. E. Housman* edited by J. Roy Birch. With an Introduction by Norman Page. Illustrations by David Harris, [Cambridge:] Silent Books [for] The Housman Society, 1995. **One of 150 numbered copies.

Private Collection.

MUSICAL SETTINGS

Case 7

Attempts to set poetry to music do not inevitably give pleasure to poets. Wordsworth was distressed that a stanza of one of his poems had been omitted by Donkin. Gilbert Murray, speaking of Brahms's setting of a song by Goethe, concluded that musicians were devils.[69]

Housman, like many of his time, was uninterested in serious music.[70] Even so, when composers sought leave to set his verse, he freely gave permission for them to do so. He charged no fee, but generally requiring British composers not to reprint the words of his verse with their music. But he had no desire whatever to hear what they had composed. This desire was, however, at least once frustrated. Percy Withers records:[71]

> I thought one evening in the library to quiet a reaction so tumultous, following the gramophone records of Vaughan Williams' setting of four of his lyrics, that my wife, who sat near him, was momentarily expecting him to spring from his chair and rush headlong out of the room; and the torment was still on his suffused and angry visage when the records were finished, and I first realized the havoc my mistaken choice had caused. I thought to soothe him by playing some record of his own choosing. He looked rather lost when I asked him to name one, but presently suggested the Fifth Symphony, for the curious reason that he remembered to have heard it well spoken of. At the end he made a non-committal and quite colourless comment on the slow movement; the others he ignored.

(60) *Songs from A E Housman's A Shropshire Lad*, London: Meridian KE 77031/2 Stereo, with Notes by John Michael East. **This tape recording includes settings by Arthur Somervell, George Butterworth, E. J. Moeran, Graham Peel, C. W. Orr, Armstrong Gibbs, Arnold Bax, John Ireland and Ivor Gurney, sung by Graham Trew. Of these composers, the earliest is Somervell (1863-1937), whose settings were published in 1904.

Private Collection.

(61) George Butterworth, *Bredon Hill and other Songs from "A Shropshire Lad" (A. E. Housman)*, London: Augener Ltd, s.a.

Private Collection.

---

69. For Wordsworth, see G. V. Cox, *Recollections of Oxford*, London 1868, p. 291; for Goethe, Sir Duncan Wilson, *Gilbert Murray OM*, Oxford 1987, p. 167.

70. See *PLW/AEH* pp. 131 sq.; Bryan N. S. Gooch/David S. Thatcher, *Musical Settings of Late Victorian and Modern British Literature*, New York, 1976. See also *op.cit.* p. 209 (Dennis Davenport, *A. E. Housman and English Song*. M.A. Thesis: University of Birmingham, 1974; Graham Trew, *Housman Society Journal* 18, 1992, pp. 51-63).

71. Withers, *A Buried Life*, London 1940, p. 82. Probably, the recording was of Vaughan Williams' *On Wenlock Edge*, sung by Gervase Elwes (re-issued, Opal CD 9844). Housman had given Vaughan Williams special permission to print the verses on one program (*Letters* pp. 106, 152), and later learnt that the composer had omitted two verses from "Is My Team Ploughing" (*ibid.* p. 199) The composer was unrepentant, affirming that the poet should have been grateful for the suppression of the two lines (Richards p. 221).

(62) Gervase Elwes. Vaughan Williams, on Wenlock Edge. Roger Quilter, *Settings of Shakespeare and others*, Wadhurst (E. Sussex): Pavilion Records Ltd (Opal CD 9844), with notes chiefly by Charles Haynes. **This compact disk includes Vaughan Williams's "On Wenlock Edge"; Janet Hamilton's "By Wenlock Town"; Graham Peel's "In summertime on Bredon"; as well as other settings of others' poems.

Private collection.

(63) Irma Taylor Wilson, "With Rue My Heart is Laden. Song. The Words by A. E. Hausman [sic]", Chicago: The Gamble Hinged Music Company, 1913. **The composer was hardly the first in America to set Housman's verse. The error "Hausman" appears throughout the publication, and calls to mind Housman's permission given to E. Frank Lambert: "'The terms' on which Mr Lambert may print my words with his music are that he should spell my name right" (Richards p. 90; *Letters* p. 105).

Private Collection.